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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet describes the new Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) Essential Skills Reading Test which was given to every fourth, seventh, and tenth grader in Michigan in 1989. The questions addressed in the pamphlet include: (1) Why is a new MEAP reading test needed? (2) How has the teaching of reading changed? (3) How is the new MEAP reading test different from previous tests? (4) What kinds of questions will students be asked on the new test? (5) How will the new reading test be scored? and (6) How will students perform on the new reading tests? The pamphlet includes examples from the new and old tests. (RS)

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A Parent's Guide to the MEAP Essential Skills Reading Test*

*the new MEAP reading test

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"It's here!"

After five years of research and study by more than 1,500 Michigan educators, the new MEAP (Michigan Educational Assessment Program) reading test is ready! Every fourth, seventh, and tenth grader in Michigan's public schools will take the test in the fall, 1989. This brochure has been prepared to answer questions you may have about the new test, called the "Essential Skills Reading Test."

"Why is a new MEAP reading test needed?"

Rapidly changing technological advances and increased foreign competition have led American business and industry to expect their workers to have a higher level of reading skills than ever before. The State Board of Education responded to this need in 1986 by approving revised goals and objectives for the teaching of reading. These goals and objectives reflect what recent research shows is the best method of teaching reading. The new MEAP reading test, in turn, reflects these new goals and objectives.

"How has the teaching of reading changed?"

In the past, it was believed that successful readers were those who had mastered a series of reading skills, such as knowing the sounds of letters and identifying the main idea of a paragraph. Research has shown that reading is more than just a collection of skills. Rather, it is a process of finding the meaning of a reading selection using these skills. Equally important is how the reader's experience, interests, and purpose for reading are used in understanding

what is read. Teachers today demonstrate how good readers think as they read, and they provide students with many opportunities to practice their thinking skills. Instead of relying solely on reading workbooks, teachers ask their students to read more real literature. The traditional reading skills are still taught, but it is recognized that mastering these skills is just one part of the reading process.

"How is the new MEAP reading test different from previous tests?"

Until now, the MEAP reading test tested many separate skills, such as finding root words, identifying prefixes and suffixes, and defining words. Educators now know that mastering these separate reading skills does not guarantee a child will become a good reader. Recent research has shown that *understanding* a reading selection is the best measure of reading ability, and neccessary for success in the work place. For this reason, the new MEAP reading test contains two longer, more challenging reading selections. One is a story, and the other is an informational selection, similar to the kind found in social studies or science textbooks. The new test will measure whether students understand these reading selections.

"What kinds of questions will students be asked on the new test?

Students taking the new test will be asked to answer four types of questions about each of the two reading selections:

1 **Constructing Meaning.**
These questions will measure how well students understand the reading selection and whether they can use the information they have read to make decisions.

2 **Topic Familiarity.**
These questions will measure how much students already know about the subject of a reading selection before they read it.

3 **Knowledge About Reading.**
These questions will measure students' understanding of (1) applying appropriate reading strategies on the test, such as skimming, summarizing, and re-reading, and (2) identifying literary devices the author has used, such as titles, subtitles, italics, illustrations, and graphs.

4 **Students' Self-Report of Performance, Effort, and Interest.**
These questions will measure students' attitudes about reading the test selections. Did they work hard to understand the meaning of the selections they read? Did they enjoy reading the selections? Do they see themselves as good readers? Would they like to read more reading selections like the ones they read in the test?

"How will the new reading test be scored?"

Satisfactory performance on the reading test will be based on how well a student does on the "constructing meaning" questions for both reading selections. To receive "satisfactory performance," a student must achieve a score of 300 or more on each reading selection. A score of 299 or below indicates the student "needs improvement." The answers to the other three types of questions will help teachers understand each student's "constructing meaning" score. Teachers can use these results with students and parents to develop an individualized plan so that each student will have the opportunity to become a successful reader.

"How will students perform on the new reading test?"

The new MEAP reading test will be more challenging than the previous test because it measures a higher standard of reading. For this reason, this first year's test scores will be viewed as a benchmark from which to chart student progress. Student achievement in reading is expected to advance each year as school districts across the state adapt their reading instruction to the State Board of Education's revised goals and objectives. In addition, educators will not be comparing this year's MEAP reading test scores with last year's scores because the new test is different and the method of scoring is different.

For more information about the revised reading goals and objectives, contact:

Instructional Specialists Program
Michigan Department of Education
P.O. Box 30008
Lansing, Michigan 48909
517/373-2590

For more information about the new MEAP reading test, contact:

Michigan Educational Assessment Program
Michigan Department of Education
P.O. Box 30008
Lansing, Michigan 48909
517/373-8393

Example from the Previous MEAP Reading Test (from the test for fourth graders)

The previous test contained lists of questions, with an occasional short (one or two paragraph) reading selection. The three examples below ask students to identify a synonym and an antonym, and define a prefix.

1 **The famous movie star was on television last night.**
In this sentence, famous means

- ☐ A. smart
- ☐ B. pretty
- ☐ C. friendly
- ☐ D. well-known

2 **Playing with matches is a foolish thing to do.**
The opposite of foolish is

- ☐ A. hot
- ☐ B. stupid
- ☐ C. wise
- ☐ D. simple

3 **Sometimes we misread words.**
The best meaning for the prefix mis is

- ☐ A. well
- ☐ B. just
- ☐ C. never
- ☐ D. wrongly

Example from the New MEAP Reading Test (from the test for fourth graders)

The reading selection is a four-page illustrated story called "The Magic Whistle," by David Gilfaldi. These are constructing meaning questions. Directions: Choose the best answer.

1 **This story is mostly about how Billy**

- ☐ A. met new friends in an unexpected way.
- ☐ B. wanted one pet, but found too many of them.
- ☐ C. would rather play with animals than people.
- ☐ D. learned to do tricks with a magic whistle.

2 **What did Billy learn in this story?**

- ☐ A. A sad day can change in ways you do not expect.
- ☐ B. Dogs can make better friends than children.
- ☐ C. Old friends are more important than new ones.
- ☐ D. A broken toy can turn out to be magical.

3 **What was Billy's biggest problem?**

- ☐ A. He needed to find new friends.
- ☐ B. He needed to find out how to make the whistle work.
- ☐ C. He wanted to find a way to move back to Linden.
- ☐ D. Billy received a reward for returning the whistle to its owner.

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